

## Message Text

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ACTION CU-04

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R 171150Z DEC 76  
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1682  
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE  
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST  
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST  
AMEMBASSY ROME  
AMEMBASSY SOFIA  
AMEMBASSY WARSAW  
AMCONSUL ZAGREB  
USIA WASHDC

UNCLAS PRAGUE 3552

USIA FOR IEU

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS/ OEXC, CZ  
SUBJECT: THE DARKER SIDE OF THE LAPO VISIT (LOGISTICS)

1. WHILE THE VISIT OF THE LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA TO PRAGUE AND BRATISLAVA DEC. 8 AND 10 WAS A STUNNING MUSICAL SUCCESS, AND THE LOGISTICAL SIDE OF LAPO'S VISIT WENT SMOOTHLY, AT TIMES THIS POST WAS ONLY HALF AN HOUR AHEAD OF POTENTIAL DISASTER AND THE FULL RESOURCES OF THE PRESS AND CULTURAL SECTION WERE ENTIRELY DEVOTED TO LAPO-RELATED MATTERS FOR ALL OF THREE AND MOST OF FOUR WEEKS BEFORE THE CONCERTS.

2. SOME GUIDELINES FOR THE FUTURE SENDING OF LARGE CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS TO EASTERN EUROPE, AS THEY CONCERN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, MIGHT BE:

3. A. ALL ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRANSPORTATION OF PERSONNEL  
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ANDDPROPERTIES, INCLUDING INTERNAL HOTEL AND TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS, SHOULD BE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF AN EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONAL IMPRESSARIO. IN PRINCIPLE, IT IS DIFFICULT TO DISAGREE WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S DESIRE TO TURN THIS PROJECT OVER TO LOCAL GROUPS LIKE PRAGOKONCERT AND SLOVKONCERT, BUT, AS ARRIVAL TIME APPROACHED, THEIR EXPERIENCE, RESOURCES

AND POWER SIMPLY WERE NOT UP TO THE TASK. NEITHER CONCERT AGENCY COULD RESOLVE LOGISTICAL KNOTS, SUCH AS A DIFFERENCE OF VIEW BETWEEN AN AIRLINE AND A HOTEL ABOUT ARRIVAL TIMES, AND, DESPITE HAVING THE FIGURES IN FRONT OF THEM, NEITHER CONCERT AGENCY COULD COME UP WITH THE NEEDED PLANES AND TRUCKS TO TRANSPORT THE ORCHESTRA, NOR COULD THEY FIGURE OUT HOW TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM. THIS RESULTED IN THE APAO SPENDING THANDSGIVING DAY MEASURING THE DIMENSIONS OF CHECHOFRAC TRUCKS AGAINST THE LAPO PORPERTY LISTS, SEEING THAT WE HAD ADEQUATE TRANSPORT FOR THE JOURNEY TO BRATISLAVA. IT ALSO MEANT THE PAO SPENDING THE FOLLOWING MORNING IN THE CONTROL TOWER OFFICE OF CZECHOSLOVAK AIRLINE'S CARGO MANAGER, GOING OVER CARGO SPECIFICATIONS ON POTENTIALLY AVAILABLE PLANES, IN AN EFFORT TO DISSUADE THE AIRLINE AND CONCERT AGENCY OF THEIR PROPOSED SOLUTION; I.E., SENDING AN IL-62 FROM HAVANA TO SOFIA VIA MONTREAL AND PRAGUE IN A SINGLE 18-HOUR PERIOD TO PICK UP THE ORCHESTRA AND PROPERTIES. ONLY COLLEAGUE JOHN DARCH'S DISCOVERY OF A BALKAN AIR IL-14 CARGO PLANE TWO DAYS BEFORE THE ORCHESTRA CAME TO PRAGUE PULLED THIS ONE OUT OF THE FIRE.

4. B. THE STATE DEPARTMENT ESCORT OFFICER ON SUCH TRIPS SHOULD NOT ONLY REPRESENT THE PERFORMING GROUPS VIEWS TO THE POSTS; E.E., "FLEISCHMANN IS THREATENING TO CANCEL THE CONCERT," BUT THE DEPARTMENT AND EMBASSY'S VIEWS TO THE PERFORMERS, WHOM WE ARE PAYING. SUCH AN ESCORT SHOULD ALSO HAVE THE BACKUP BUDGET AND RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP RESOLVE SNAGS THAT DEVELOP ALONG THE TOUR, SUCH AS TRANSPORTATION BREAKDOWNS. THIS POST WAS, FOR SEVERAL DAYS, CAUGHT IN THE UNENVIABLE POSITION OF ATTEMPTING TO RESOLVE AIRLINE AND UNCLASSIFIED

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HOTEL QUESTIONS BETWEEN AN UNCOOPERATIVE LOCAL CONCERTT AGENCY ON ONE HAND, AND A VOCIFEROUS BUT NOT ALWAYS PRECISELY CLEAR ORCHESTRA MANAGEMENT ON THE OTHER.

5. C. SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE THE APPEARANCE, THE IMPRESSARIO SHOULLD VISIT THE POST FOR TECHNICAL RUN-THROUGH OF EVERY ASPECT OF THE PERFORMANCES. THIS WOULD AVOID SUCH CONFLICTS AS THEEORCHESTRA'S THREATENED CANCELLATION OF ONE CONCERT BECAUSE OF AN INTERNAL DISPUTE ABOUT HOW THE INSTRUMENTS SHOULD BE PLACED ON THE CONCERT STAGE, OR THE DISCOVERY THAT THE FREIGHT ELEVATOR IN THE BRATISLAVA CONCERT HALL WAS TOO SMALL FOR MOST OF THE ORCHESTRA'S INSTRUMENT CASES, NECESSITATING THE LAST-MINUTE HIRING OF ADDITIONAL PORTERS TO TOTE THE PROPERTIES UP THREE FLIGHTS OF STAIRS.

6. D. THERE SHOULD BE AN ADVANCE BRIEFING OF THE ENTIRE ORCHESTRA OR ARTISTIC GROUP ABOUT THE COUNTRIES TO BE VISITED, LOCAL POLITICAL CONDITIONS, AND THE ENDEMIC FRUSTRATIONS OF LIFE

IN PLACES WHERE, EVEN "FACILITATED" AIRPORT AND BORDER CLEARANCE ARE NOT LIKE GOING BETWEEN DETROIT AND WINDSOR, AND WHERE "ASSISTED" HOTEL CHECKINS AND OUTS ARE LESS SPEEDY THAN IN THE NEAREST BILTMORE.

7. E. THE MAIN TERMS OF THE PERFORMING GROUP'S UNION CONTRACT SHOULD BE CLEARLY SPELLED OUT TO THE POSTS IN ADVANCE, ESPECIALLY CONCERNING TRAVEL TIMES AND CONDITIONS. IT WAS QUITE BY CHANCE THAT THIS POST LEARNED TWO DAYS BEFORE THE ORCHESTRA'S ARRIVAL OF A CONTRACT PROVISION CALLING FOR NO TRAVEL BY PROPELLER DRIVEN AIRCRAFT, AND NO TRAIN TRAVEL OF MORE THAN FIVE CONSECUTIVE HOURS, REQUIRING OUR CHARTERING A SECOND JET FOR THE PRAGUE-BRATISLAVA PART OF THE TRIP.

8. F. THE PRECISE ROLES OF RESPONSIBILITIES OF PERFORMING GROUP, ESCORT, IMPRESSARIO, AND POST SHOULD BE CLEAR LONG BEFORE THE TOUR BEGINS. A POST OF THIS SIZE SHOULD NOT BE UNCLASSIFIED

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EXPECTED TO SUSPEND ALL NORMAL ACTIVITY FOR MOST OF A MONTH TO GET INTO THE CONCERT BUSINESS.

9. IN RETROSPECT, THE PROBLEM OF FIRST MAGNITUDE, FROM WHICH MOST OTHER DIFFICULTIES STEMMED, WAS THAT LOCAL CONCERT AGENCIES SIMPLY COULD NOT DELIVER ON THE SERVICES REQUIRED TO ACCOMMODATE A MAJOR AMERICAN ORCHESTRA, AND THERE IS NO LIKELIHOOD THEY WILL DO ANY BETTER NEXT TIME.

1. THE SITUATION HERE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA WAS COMPOUNDED BY THE PRESENT UNFAVORABLE STATE OF BILATERAL POLITICAL RELATIONS. IT WAS NECESSARY FOR THE AMBASSADOR TO DISCUSS THE GOC'S INEPT HANDLING OF LAPO WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER, AND THE HEAD OF THE MFA SIXTH DEPARTMENT SAID AT ONE POINT, "FRANKLY, MR. QUINN, WE DID NOT THINK LAST WEEK YOU WOULD MAKE IT."

1. IF THE LOCAL AGENCY CANNOT, AND THE POST SHOULD NOT, GET INTO THE CONCERT STAGING BUSINESS, THE LOGICAL SOLUTION, ALBEIT A COSTLY ONE, IS TO TURN THE PROJECT OVER TO A PROFESSIONAL IMPRESSARIO WITH INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE.  
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